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ABSTRACT

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SCHOOL READINESS:

TEACHER JUDGMENT VERSUS

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School Readiness: Teacher Judgment

Versus Formal Assessment

Abstract

With increasing frequency, school readiness tests are used to determine a child's potential for kindergarten and/or the child's placement in a certain type of kindergarten program. This study compared two teachers' predictions of test results for twenty children with the scores assessed in actual testing situations. It also queried the children and their parents about the purposes and values of standardized tests.

The results of the study showed that these teachers were able to predict with a high degree of accuracy the test assessed scores the children received. The children had little understanding of the meanings of tests, and the parents wanted a combination of test results and teachers' observations to be used in making judgments of their children's abilities.

School Readiness:

Teacher Judgment Versus Formal Assessment

During the past ten years, there has been a significant increase in the number of children who enter kindergarten later than the date specified by the state regulations. Many parents have expected school entry in September if their child has reached the age of five. Although certain states have set school entry at September 1 for children who are five years of age, other states delay the cutoff date to December 1. Some parents, often encouraged by school authorities, have delayed school entry even if their child is five by the set date because his/her development did not seem to equal that of other children entering school. There is much confusion among parents and teachers, administrators, and policy makers about the appropriate age and developmental level needed for success in the early grades in school.

Concerns about readiness for school learning have prompted many school districts to initiate intensive screening procedures. Many also have developed separate programs for younger and older kindergarten entrants. Changes in kindergarten curriculum have occurred because some educators and parents have pressured for more structured academic study at younger ages. In The Hurried Child, however, David Elkind writes about the effects of the more intensive curriculum on children:

> The child who cannot keep up in this system, even if only temporarily, is often regarded as a defective vessel and is labeled learning disabled or minimally brain damaged or

hyperactive. Yet these same children can easily demonstrate how much knowledge they acquire from television and how quickly they can acquire the skills needed to operate electronic games. The factory system. . . hurries children by ignoring individual differences and by prematurely labeling many children defective.

Much of this hurrying is accomplished with the aid of standardized tests, but schools hurry children in other ways as well. The rigid age grouping of our schools, in which all curriculum and teaching are tightly sequenced, is easily abused when administrators are under stress. When school is looked upon as an assembly line, and children as empty vessels to be filled, there is a temptation to speed up the assembly line, to increase production. Why not put in as much at kindergarten as at first grade? . . .

Schools today hurry children because administrators are under stress to produce better products. This blinds them to what we know about children and leads them to treat children like empty bottles on an assembly line getting a little fuller at each grade level. When the bottles don't get full enough, management puts pressure on the operator (the teacher), who is now held accountable for filling his or her share of the bottles, and on quality control (making sure the information is valid and that the bottle is not defective). This factory emphasis hurries children because it ignores individual differences in mental abilities and learning rates. (p. 48).

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Kindergarten teachers often feel pressured by parents to provide a curriculum focused on academic learnings. Some administrators pressure teachers to initiate formal math and reading programs in their kindergartens. Nancy Webster, a kindergarten teacher, states that children have unique needs to be met and a developmental level to be considered. She complains, however, that kindergartens have taken on the characteristics of the first grade, stressing pencil and paper activities. There is little "time to teach the child, not the subject. (Webster, 1984, p.330).

But what happens to the child who is not ready for this academically oriented kindergarten curriculum? Sometimes schools cope with the problem of those children who are "not ready" by developing new classes, often called "developmental kindergartens" or "young fives." Making defensible decisions on whether or not a child belongs in one of these special programs has led schools to use batteries of tests for identifying those children who may not be ready for the formalized kindergarten program. Janet Black (1979) begins her study of the communicative competence of kindergartners by stating, "While inappropriate use of standardized testing can occur at all levels of the educational ladder, it would appear that the greatest potential for harm exists during the early childhood years." (p.49). It is the increasing use of standardized tests to determine school readiness that prompted the research study reported in this article.

Background of the Study

Both parents and teachers have concerns about how well a particular child will do when he/she enters school. For many years, the schools

accepted all children in kindergarten if they had reached the age of five by a given date, and then the teacher adjusted the kindergarten program to meet the range of developmental levels present in the group. In recent years, however, with increased pressure on the schools to be accountable for the performance of students as they progress in elementary school, administrators and teachers have initiated formal entrance screening procedures, usually standardized tests, for determining a child's readiness for kindergarten. The results of these tests often become the determining factor for strongly recommending to parents that they enter or delay the child's entry into the regular school program, or that the child be placed in a transitional classroom, that is, a program designed to give the child more time and prepare him/her for an academically oriented kindergarten program.

Like tests at other levels of schooling, kindergarten readiness tests are accepted by parents and the public as indications that schools take seriously the business of educating children and that they use the latest scientific instruments to make proper placement decisions about children. Test results seem to give teachers "hard data" that can be used to explain the development of a child to the parents. Observed behavior in a variety of contexts loses in significance to single-sitting test results.

As kindergarten testing becomes more prevalent, parents become aware of the significance of the test results. Consciously or unconsciously they may transmit their anxiety to their children, affecting performance on the test or creating anxiety about school.

Growing dependence on readiness tests is also affecting teachers. Pre-school, kindergarten, and primary teachers who see themselves as

astute observers of children, feel a diminished confidence in their judgments. In fact, some begin to value results of tests, given in a brief time period on a particular day, over their own daily observations of children's motivation, persistence, comprehension, skill development, and emotional adjustment.

The Problem

In view of the concerns expressed, a research project was designed to explore the following questions:

(1) To what degree of accuracy can pre-school teachers predict the skills and behaviors exhibited by children on one of the tests commonly used for kindergarten screening, the Gesell School Readiness Test?

(2) How do four and five-year-olds feel about being tested?

(3) How do parents of four and five-year-olds feel about the administration and use of tests in schools?

The Instrument

The Gesell Developmental Examination consists of several tasks for which valid and reliable norms of performance have been established. (Bates, 1979). Through the presentation of these tasks and the resulting evaluation of the performance, the testmakers claim it is possible to determine a child's over-all developmental age. Developmental age is established through the observations and recordings of task performance by the examiner as well as posture, facial expressions, extraneous language,

and movements. These features are used on the developmental examination since the child's behavior during testing is viewed as revealing as much about his/her developmental level as the tasks themselves.

Subtests of the Gesell Developmental Examination include:

Initial Interview

The initial interviews with the children consist of questions asked about themselves and their family (e.g. age, birthday, siblings, parents). The interview offers a quick glimpse of the child's level of performance and powers of organization. Sentence structure, grammar, and pronunciation are observed and recorded as well as specific responses to the questions.

Cubes - The child is directed to construct a series of specific structures with and without a demonstration or model. These tasks are presented in order of complexity. From the resulting performance comes information regarding the child's ability to follow directions, to do fine motor skills, to remain attentive, to perform visual and perceptual skill tasks, to become involved in constructive play, to copy, and to respond to structured situations.

Name and Numbers - The child is asked to write her/his name (or any other letters) and some numbers. The examiner observes the child for shifts of body or paper, for control of pencil strokes, for placement and size of letters and numerals, for presence of a base line, and for reversals and substitutions of letters or numerals.

Copy Forms: Seven forms are presented to the child one at a time, and he/she is directed to "make one like this." The forms are presented in sequence: circle, cross, square, triangle, divided rectangle, horizontal diamond, and vertical diamond. Along with ability to form the shape, the examiner attends to the child's starting point, his/her placement of the pencil on the paper, control and direction of stroke(s), and the size and proportions of the figures.

Incomplete Man: The child is given a picture of a partially drawn figure and is asked to finish it. In evaluating this, the examiner records the parts added and the way in which they are constructed. This includes the length of lines, attachment to the figure, control of strokes, formation of angles, and addition of extra parts.

Visual I - The child is shown a form and is directed to circle a matching form on a paper which contains 12 sets. This task requires an understanding of direction, ability to follow instructions, ability to sustain interest, and ability to identify the matching shape, to circle one form, to maintain direction of the stroke and control of the circle, and to find his/her place on paper.

Naming Animals - The child is directed to "name all the animals you can think of until I tell you to stop" and is timed for 60 seconds. The examiner records exactly what the child says and the number of seconds the child sustains talk. Test norms have been established for categories of animals and time of response.

Closing Interview

The concluding interview asks the child about home and school preferences. The child is asked to tell what he/she likes to do best indoors at school, outdoors at school, indoors at home, and outdoors at home. Answers are recorded verbatim and are assessed based upon norms established for classes of activity.

Design of Study

This study was conducted in two university laboratory preschool centers, both of which serve diverse populations from the university and surrounding communities. Some of the parents of children in the centers are connected with the university as faculty, staff, or students, while others have no affiliation with the university beyond the preschool. One of the centers is a parent cooperative preschool (parent participation required) and the other is a traditional preschool. Parents pay tuition for youngsters enrolled in either school. Both centers operate four days per week with two and one-half hour morning or afternoon sessions. Children in the traditional pre-school are enrolled for four days per week; cooperative enrollments are for two, three or four days per week.

The two teachers involved in the study have been head teachers in their respective centers for fifteen and eight years, and they have had previous preschool teaching experience before joining the university staff. Each teacher has participated in a Gesell Developmental Assessment Training Workshop. The third principal investigator in the study is a Professor of Language Arts in the Department of Teacher Education. She

has been a faculty member for thirteen years and previously taught and supervised teachers in elementary schools. The investigators sought approval for the study from parents, the university research committee, and the laboratory school supervisor prior to initiation of the research.

The study consisted of three parts: 1) Predicted and test-determined results on nine sections of the Gesell School Readiness Test, those sections that have been identified by the authors of the test as most relevant in predicting kindergarten readiness. 2) The child interview questions, adapted from those reported by Gleadow (1982). 3) Parent questionnaire, designed by the third principal investigator of this study. Results included predicted scores contrasted with actual scores on the Gesell Test, tabulations of children's responses to interview questions, and tabulations of parents' responses to questionnaires.

The study began with each of the teachers randomly selecting 10 youngsters (5 girls and 5 boys) from her morning and afternoon groups of children. Only children age-eligible for kindergarten the following year (five years of age by December 1) were included in the pool of candidates, and children who had previously participated in Gesell Assessments were eliminated. This left a potential pool of 70 children. The selection was done by assigning each child a number and then randomly drawing numbers to establish the list of 20 participants and 8 alternates (alternates to be included if parental permission for any of the initial 20 was withheld). Parents of the children selected were then informed of the nature of the study and asked to sign permission slips indicating their informed consent. All of the parents contacted agreed to permit their children to participate.

The age range of children was 4.4 to 5.4 years. Once permission was granted, each teacher filled in a complete set of assessment forms for each participating child giving her prediction of the child's score on each item as well as the child's response to the assessment situation. Once the prediction was completed, an over-all score was determined. Each prediction took approximately 30 minutes to complete. The two teachers did not discuss this process until after the actual assessments of the children were completed. They did, however, work through one sample prediction together before engaging in this phase of the study to insure that their interpretations were similar. Teacher predictions of child performance were completed during term break in December and early January. These judgments were based solely upon teacher recall of observations and interactions with the children during October and November. The teachers did not refer to any of their written activity evaluations, anecdotal records, or time samples when making their predictions.

After the predictions were completed, actual assessment with the children began. Each teacher arranged release time from her classroom so that she could visit the other center. The examiner and child were introduced to each other during the child-selected activity period. The head teacher introduced the other teacher (examiner) to the group as "my friend, a teacher from_____school who has something special for some of you to work on with her." Empty classrooms or teacher offices were used for the testing session, and a "do-not-disturb" sign was posted. Most of the children were quite willing to participate in the assessment when first invited to do so. A few refused initially because of some other activity in

which they wished to engage, but later they participated. One child calmly but definitely declined to be tested even though she was given several opportunities to do so; she also refused to participate in the assessment with her own teacher after the study was completed, and she gave no explanation for her decision.

Testing Procedures

The classroom teachers involved in the study are committed to providing a consistently safe and secure environment for the children in their classrooms. They are concerned about psychological, as well as physical "safety." No researchers are ever permitted to place children in situations which might create undue stress or anxiety. As researchers themselves, therefore, the teachers in the study tried to make the assessment situations pleasant, comfortable, and low-stress for the children. The visiting examiner was introduced to the total group as the teacher's friend; time was spent with the group (singing songs, listening to stories, assisting with dressing for outdoor play, etc.) When the child and examiner left the classroom to do the assessment, they were accompanied by the child's teacher to the assessment room. The examination was referred to as "some special work" when talking with the children; at no time prior to or during the assessment was it called a "test."

A few children displayed some initial anxiety, but they soon relaxed. Examiners did note signs of stress and fatigue in some of the children during the testing, particularly during the paper and pencil tasks. A few children appeared reluctant to attempt these because of their expressed concern that

their parents would be displeased if their efforts weren't "good." When reassured by the examiner that she would be keeping the papers--not sending them home--the children were willing to attempt the tasks. In contrast, a few children were so pleased with what they had done, that they were disappointed they couldn't take their papers home.

All children who participated in the study completed the assessment items during one session with no apparent need for a break; none expressed a desire to terminate the experience. Most of the children seemed to find the assessment situation interesting.

Items presented during the assessment were the same as those scored during the prediction phase. As soon as the child completed the assessment, he/she was accompanied back to the classroom by the examiner and supported in selecting an activity area in which to participate. The head teacher was notified of the child's return. Each assessment took 30-40 minutes with another 30 minutes after the session required for scoring and evaluation write-up by the examiner.

The children in the study participated in a brief interview with their classroom teacher the next school day after the Gesell Readiness Test was administered. Five open-ended questions were asked which elicited the child's understanding of the purposes of tests, how they felt while taking the test, and what they thought would be done with the results.

About the same time, a questionnaire was sent home to parents asking their views on the appropriateness of tests, the use of test results, and the influence that test scores should have on classroom instruction. For ten of the questions a true-false response was expected, plus any comments the

parent chose to add in the space provided. For one additional question a choice of three responses was given.

Upon completion of all actual assessments, predicted scores and actual scores were compared. The time lapse between prediction and actual assessment varied from one week to 2½ months.

Comparisons of the Predicted and Actual Skills and Behavior of Children on the Gesell School Readiness Test

The predicted and test assessed results for each child are reported in Table 1. For eighteen of the children, the predicted composite developmental score and the assessed score were in agreement or only one-half year apart. For the other child who was tested the predicted composite developmental and the assessed scores were one year apart (Subject 10). One child refused to be tested.

Generally, it is reasonable to assume that growth occurring between the time of observation (October-November) and time of assessment (late January-February) could account for the slight differences between predicted and assessed scores. Subject 10 scored a lower over-all developmental age on the assessment instrument than was predicted by the classroom teacher. Given further opportunities to observe, interact with, and work with this child, the teacher would depend upon her observations and more detailed knowledge of the child's classroom performance as a more accurate indicator of readiness than the assessment instrument.

It is important to note that teachers completed the predictions based solely upon recall of two months of the child's classroom performance. No

reference was made to anecdotal records, time samples, activity evaluations or any of the other data which teachers use to record and evaluate child progress over the course of the year. Use of this data would undoubtedly help the teacher predict performance.

Nine subtests were given to each of the nineteen children who were tested, giving a total of 171 subtests administered. Three subtest comparisons could not be made due to incomplete information. For 146 subtests (86.9%) the teachers predicted scores and the assessed scores were in agreement or less than one half year apart. For the remaining 22 subtests (13.1%) the discrepancies were: 16 with one year discrepancy, 5 with one and one-half year discrepancy, and 1 with a two year discrepancy.

Predictions for subject 1 to 10 were made by one classroom teacher and the test was administrated by the second teacher. The opposite was true for subjects 11-20; that is, their classroom teacher made the predictions and the other teacher conducted the test.

A comparison of predicted and actual test results for each child shows the following:

Subject 1. The predicted developmental age and the test assessed developmental age were both at the five-year level. Difference in individual components of the tests were less than a six-month interval in each case. The predicted score in name printing ability was 5 years, and the test-determined score was 5.5 years. In number printing ability the predicted score was also 5 but the test determined score was 4.5. Since there is so much school and parental emphasis on the printing of names, that skill may have been practiced at home by this child more than number

printing. Differences between predicted and tested scores, however, were both less than .5 years.

Subject 2. The predicted developmental age and the test determined developmental age were both at the five-year level although the teacher assessor placed the range at 5-5½ years. This child chooses to spend much of her time at school with paper and pencil activities as well as with puzzles and manipulatives, so the teacher felt that she had a more complete knowledge of the child's abilities than a test could show.

Subject 3. This subject refused the invitation to take part in the assessment on two different days. After the study was completed, the predictor again invited the child to be assessed and she refused.

Subject 4. The predicted developmental age and the test assessed developmental age were both at the five-year level for this child although the teacher assessor set a range of 4½-5. This child has excellent use of language and her behavior is mature so the teacher may have overestimated her pencil and paper ability or the test may not have accurately determined her abilities.

Subject 5. The predicted developmental age and the test assessed developmental age differed by a six month interval; the predicted result was at the 4.5 level and assessed developmental age was at the five-year level. This child is a quiet boy who often played by himself. The teacher felt that she had not observed his fine motor control or his pencil and paper tasks abilities. The test seemed to give additional, valuable information in this case.

Subject 6. The predicted developmental age and the test assessed developmental age were both at the 4.5 year level. This is a child who

becomes frustrated easily, and the teacher's predictions were based on judgments about the difficulty he might have attending to test tasks. In contrast, the boy seemed to enjoy the individual attention from the tester during the testing experience. This child is very verbal as indicated by the scores on the interview, the animal test, and interests section, but his fine motor control is less developed.

Subject 7. The predicted developmental age for this child fell within the range of the test assessed developmental age, the predicted falling at the five-year level and the test assessed between the 4-5½ year range. This child has great emotional variability and is very verbal; he sometimes talks around the task at hand and avoids becoming involved. He may have more ability in test taking than the teacher predicted, but in the classroom he has difficulty attending to the task at hand. The brief classroom observation time available to the teacher may have caused her to assume his maturity, but his later difficulties with behavior in kindergarten reflect the variability shown in the assessed test results.

Subject 8. The predicted developmental age and the test assessed developmental age were both at the 4.5+ year level. This is a boy who is very affectionate and has some speech patterns that are imitative. The teacher's judgments, which fell slightly below the test scores in some areas, may have been based on signs of immaturity she observed daily in the classroom.

Subject 9. The predicted developmental age and the assessed developmental age were both at the 5.5 year level. This child has a very mature vocabulary and also often chooses pencil and paper tasks at school.

The teacher's estimate of the child's ability on the Visuals portion of this test is higher than the test shows, but she feels that the child's visual perception is more developed than some of her other skills.

Subject 10. The predicted developmental age and the test assessed developmental age for this child were a full year apart (P=5, A=4). This child is slow to warm up to new people and often exhibits onlooker behavior before entering into an activity. Since the test situation itself was with a person unknown to her and done in an allotted amount of time, the teacher felt that the test assessed score was not a true measurement of the child's abilities. Therefore, the classroom teacher retested the child approximately five months later and noted significantly higher scores (A=5-5.5). Reports from the parents after the child entered kindergarten indicated that she was having a successful year and seemed to be a happy, well adjusted, unstressed child.

Subject 11. In the composite developmental score and in four subtests the teacher predicted scores of one year or more below the assessed scores. Subject 11 was 4½ at the time of the prediction and was scored at a 4½-5 year old developmental level by the predictor. This child displayed frequent immature behaviors within the classroom setting, often being non-cooperative, withdrawn, and uninvolved. The subject's parents withdrew her from school during spring term in response to the child's refusal to attend. Given the opportunity for undivided adult attention and reinforcement in the assessment situation, the child performed in a more mature manner and was scored at a 5-5½ over-all developmental age.

Subject 12. Subject 12 was 4.3 at the time of the prediction and was scored at 4.5 by the predictor. Over-all age on the assessment instrument

was at 5. This subject attended preschool only 2 days per week and usually engaged in independent/solitary activities. Adult interactions were infrequent and always adult initiated. Both predicted and assessed developmental ages were scored as higher than chronological age.

Subject 13. The predicted and the assessed developmental age for this child were both at the 4.5 level. Since the child was over 5 years of age chronologically, the agreement between predicted and actual performance was interesting. The child's verbal skills were close to chronological age; delays were noted in fine motor and perceptual areas.

Subject 14. Both predicted and assessed developmental scores for this child indicate kindergarten readiness, and they are equal to her chronological age. Subject 14 attended preschool twice a week and was usually involved in play situations with other children. The child chose to devote little school time to paper/pencil, formal cognitive materials, or adult-child interactions.

Subject 15. Both predicted and assessed developmental age for this child were at 5.5, above chronological age. The predictor was correct in her assumption that the child might display some initial discomfort in the testing situation. He was concerned about his performance until he was assured that the papers would not go home.

Subject 16. This child was in the process of adapting to a new country, culture, and language. She also was a child who appeared quite shy and reserved. She had exhibited strong perceptual, adaptive, and problem-solving behaviors in the classroom setting. Limited language and reserved personality may have influenced interactions with the assessor who scored

the subject at a 4.5-5 year level during the test in comparison to the predictor's score of 5.5. Continued observation of this child's progress during the year supported the predicted age as more accurately reflecting this child's level of development. Once English was mastered, she blossomed.

Subject 17. Both predicted and assessed developmental ages were higher than chronological age and indicated that the subject was ready for kindergarten entry. This child appeared dependent upon other children in the classroom situation, however, and spent the majority of school time in socio-dramatic play with little attention given to fine motor or paper/pencil tasks.

Subject 18. Both predicted and assessed developmental ages indicate that this child is ready for kindergarten. Her classroom behavior also indicates readiness in social and emotional development because she appears very comfortable and skilled in her interactions with other children and with adults; she is open to new situations and enjoys participating in a variety of activities, displaying confidence and enthusiasm throughout the day.

Subject 19. Both predicted and assessed developmental ages were scored at a 5.5 level for this subject. The child's parents, however, had elected to delay kindergarten entry based upon personal preference, not upon concerns over child's readiness.

Subject 20. Over-all scoring of 4.5-5 in both predicted and assessed developmental age indicate agreement between observed and assessed behavior for this 4.7 year old subject. This child attended preschool twice a week and usually engaged in active and imaginative play situations with

other active children. He appeared comfortable in interactions with adults, displayed some very effective social skills, and was cooperative and outgoing in manner.

The Teachers' Judgments on the Relative Benefits of the Subtests

The two teachers participating in this study were asked to review the sub-tests and their accuracy in making predictions to determine if some subtests appeared to be more difficult to predict than other subtests. The teachers found that they were most often unable to predict accurately performance on cubes and visuals. These sub-tests examine very specific performance on tasks which are not commonly presented in preschool. One teacher found it difficult to generalize performance on activities related to these particular tasks, the other teacher concurred, primarily in herjudgment of the difficulty in predicting results on the cubes subtest.

The teachers were also asked to rank the sub-tests, in order of significance in providing useful information. Teachers agreed on the following ranking:

1. Copy forms
2. Incomplete man
3. Visuals
4. Cubes
5. Name
6. Interview
7. Animals
8. Interests
9. Numbers

When asked to explain the rationale for these rankings, it was apparent that they felt that some of the items reveal information which is generally not observed during a normal preschool day. The items which received low rankings are related to language or are tasks which are commonplace in the preschool environment and could be easily observed without making special arrangements for a "testing situation." The ranking of numbers as the lowest in significance probably reflect the teachers' opinion that this is not a very appropriate task for preschoolers since math and number concepts are much more important than number writing ability.

The teachers ranked higher items which provide information about specific skills which were most difficult for them to determine based upon recall of observations. The items also provide information about several areas of development simultaneously which, from their viewpoints, are important for school success.

Copy forms. This is a task which is not generally practiced in the preschool classroom, and performance indicates visual perception, neuromuscular and eye-hand coordination. This subtest also reveals information about the child's approach to task, ability to follow directions, problem-solving abilities, and attention span.

Incomplete Man. Again this subtest provides a wide range of information to the examiners not easily observed in a regular preschool program. Usually children have free choice of subjects for their art and no expectations are made for detail in their drawings.

Visuals. This subtest was ranked highly because it provides information about some very specific skills which the teachers feel are

important for school success: visual perception and tracking, following directions, and attention span.

Cubes. This subtest was ranked relatively high by teachers because it also provides information about a variety of skills and is especially valuable in assessing those skills in children who are not yet comfortable with paper-pencil tasks.

Name. Name writing ability was ranked in the middle because this appears to be an expected skill for kindergarten children. Because children in pre-school classrooms are encouraged to practice this ability, the teachers felt more comfortable in assessing this skill than some others. Observation of this skill could be easily performed in the classroom setting.

Interview, Animals, and Interests. These subtests were ranked relatively low by the teachers because the information which they provide is also more easily observed in the classroom setting through teacher-child and child-child interactions.

Numbers. This was the least significant subtest on the teachers' list. This placement is probably related to their feelings that number concepts are much more important than numeral writing ability.

Results of Child Interviews

Only at time of the interview were the children told that they had taken a test. The nineteen children in the two classes of preschools were interviewed. They were asked the following questions;

1. Did you like taking this test? Why?

Seventeen children responded "Yes." Their responses gave little indication that they saw any testing significance in the activities they were

asked to do because their reasons for liking the test often were similar to these--"I got to play" and "I liked the blocks." One child was undecided about the test and couldn't give a reason. Another child said he didn't like the test "because it was boring."

2. When you were taking the test how did you feel?

Fifteen of the 19 children gave positive responses to this question, such as "feeled good," "okay," or "happy." Two children gave negative responses--"I felt a little bit weird 'cause I didn't know who she was" and "sweaty." Two children did not respond to this question.

3. Why do teachers give tests?

Only three of the children gave responses to this question; the other 16 either said they didn't know or else gave no response. The three responses given were: "so people can learn things," "to see how smart you are," and "that's what schools do--you have to work hard."

4. What do you think your teacher will do with the test?

Only about one-fourth of the children had a response to this; 14 had no response or said "I don't know." Those who responded said "sometimes they don't want children to flunk," "build stuff I guess," "tell kids to work hard," "give it to a different teacher," and "make me another one."

5. Do you think your teacher should give you tests? Why?

There were two "no" responses to this question and no reasons were given. The children who gave "yes" responses added: "so kids can learn things," "cause they're fun," "to make you smart," and "because if people don't know things, they take tests." Nearly all the children thought teachers should give tests but their reasons bore no relation to the real reasons tests are given.

Results of the Parent Questionnaires

Sixteen out of 20 parents of the children tested in the two classes returned the completed questionnaires. The parents were asked to respond to 11 items, usually responding "true" or "false." No attempt was made to limit responses to views on kindergarten readiness tests in particular, only to the parents' general views on standardized tests in school.

1. I think that a standardized test usually is an accurate measure of a child's ability to know and/or perform a task.

Eight parents responded "true" to this statement, six responded "false" and two did not respond. One parent who responded "true" added the following comment in the space provided: "As a college instructor I know an examination is not always indicative of a student's comprehension level." Two parents who responded "false" to this statement said "They are not as valid with small children" and "Some people 'test' better than others."

2. I prefer to get information about my child's learning and his/her relative standing among the children in the class from:

    1. test results
    2. a combination of test results and teacher observations
    3. teacher observation

Nearly all the parents selected number two as their response to this item. Only one parent selected test results (#1) and one parent selected teacher observation (#3). A typical comment from one of the 14 parents who selected the combination of test results and teacher observations was: "I feel I need the input from both areas to get the overall picture of how my child is doing."

3. Tests should be given more often in school.

Four parents did not respond to this item; four felt that the item was true, that more tests should be given; and eight thought that more tests should not be given in school. A parent who did not choose "true" or "false" added this comment: "can't say; certainly not in pre-school." A parent who said the statement is "false" added, "As tests are constructed now, they are undesirable--the current competitiveness is also undesirable."

4. Tests are not only measures of students' learning; they are measures of the effectiveness of the teaching in the classroom.

Ten parents responded "true" to this statement and six responded "false." A parent who selected "true" added this comment: "It works both ways; if all students do poorly then something is wrong." A parent who said the statement was "false" added, "Teachers should never be slaves to how well their students do on tests; there are many other reasons why children do poorly on tests."

5. Teachers should teach in ways that will improve the scores on the tests that students take.

Nine parents indicated that they thought this statement was false and seven parents thought it was true. One parent felt that teachers should teach to achieve test scores "if the test is valid and what is being tested is important and relevant," and another said, "If they are going to be tested on a specific topic, they should all be taught it." A parent who said the statement was false said, "Improving the scores on the test itself is meaningless if students don't improve themselves."

6. It is helpful to publish test results for each school in the local newspaper.

The parents were equally divided on this issue, eight responding "true" to the statement and eight saying "false." Two parents said this in support of their "false" response: "Anything that makes children compare themselves to each other more than they already do should be avoided" and "It only helps status conscious parents relocate." A parent who said the statement was true added "I think test results for a whole school can show if there is a school weakness in a particular area" and another parent said "The public gets a better idea on the quality of teachers in that school."

7. There are more tests given to students in school now than there were 20 years ago.

Five parents did not respond to this statement. Of the remaining 11, eight thought the statement was false and three thought it was true. The few comments made indicated that parents were unsure of their response, but one parent who selected "false" in response to this item added, "Twenty years ago teachers took more personal interest in the students. Now most just go and do their job just to get it done."

8. There are tests for measuring most of the important things students learn in school.

Seven parents responded "true," seven responded "false," and two did not respond. One parent who indicated that the statement was "true" added, "most of the important 'academic' things" and another said "sometimes you need a combination of tests, however." Two of the parents who thought the statement was false said, "For some of the most important things there will

never be a test" and "tests are not given for self-esteem, how they get along with other people, or how much they need to be challenged."

9. At teacher/parent conferences, I am very interested in hearing the results of tests my child has taken.

Only two parents gave a negative response to this statement; one parent did not respond. One parent who chose "false" added, "I want to know how he is getting along day to day;" one of the 13 parents who responded "true" added, "If they are given, we're interested in the results," and another said, "Since tests are used and relied on in making assessments about my child's progress, I feel it is essential that I know and understand the results of tests my child has taken."

10. Students should be grouped for instruction in the classroom based on test scores.

One parent did not respond to this statement, five said it was "true" and 10 said it was "false." A parent who responded positively said, "I feel it is a disservice to both children who are ahead and behind to be placed in a situation that teaches to the 'middle'." Parents who responded negatively said, "Test scores sometimes do not show the true ability of a student," and "They should be grouped, but not based on test scores only; the teacher's observation should be taken into consideration."

11. If a teacher's judgment on school performance is different from that of a child's performance on a standardized test, the test should hold more significance in making decisions about the child's placement in groups for instruction.

All but one of the 16 parents felt that this statement was false. The parent who responded positively did not add a comment, but among the

negative responses were the following statements: "You learn more about a person by observing them than you learn from tests;" "As long as the teacher is competent, she/he is probably a more accurate evaluator;" and "should take both into account; it depends on the teacher and the test; so far in my limited experiences I would go with the teacher."

Conclusions of the Study

Teacher Predictions

1. Although the two teachers in this study had only two months to observe the children in daily classroom activities, they were able to predict results on the Gesell School Readiness Test with a high degree of accuracy. Both on the Composite Developmental Age and on individual subtests, the teachers' predictions matched nearly all assessed scores.
2. The teachers agreed that some of the subtests used were useful as reinforcement for their daily classroom observations and as indicators of areas that need more concentrated observation in the classrooms. The subtests that provide the most needed information are Copy Forms, Incomplete Man, and Visuals because they provide a wide range of data not easily observed during routine classroom activities. These were the subtests that the teachers had a little more difficulty in predicting.

Parent Attitudes about Tests. The sample of parents in this study is very small and includes only parents of children in two university sponsored,

private pre-schools so it is not necessarily indicative of responses of any other groups of parents. This group of parents seemed to indicate, however, that

1. both test scores and teacher judgments should be used in determining a child's learning and his/her relative standing among children in the class.
2. they are interested in hearing the results of tests their child has taken.
3. tests should not have power over teacher judgments in deciding the placement of a child for instruction.

Children's Attitudes about Tests. The 19 preschool children were questioned about their feelings about tests and the purposes for tests. An examination of these results seem to indicate that these children

1. have little understanding of the purposes of tests, and, at this time, many

   pre-schoolers may bring little understanding or fear to the term "test" itself.
2. most had positive feelings while taking their kindergarten readiness test largely because of the interesting activities involved in it, the one-on-one attention, and the positive reinforcement.
3. few had any idea about what teachers would do with the test results.

This study was conducted in response to the expanding use of standardized tests for determining a child's readiness for kindergarten. The

growing trend in testing has important consequences:

diminished respect with possible long term implications for the daily observations of children by competent professional educators;

labeling of children based on a single testing situation, and separation of them into groups based on test scores;

use of teachers' limited instructional time to administer tests to individual children;

use of a school's financial resources to purchase tests, provide training for testers, and pay for scoring;

pressure to test children using inadequately trained testers.

Although limited to a small population of children who attend university sponsored preschools, their parents, and two teachers, the results of this study do not indicate a need for standardized tests for predicting school readiness. The two teachers in this study, drawing on only a few weeks of observation in the classroom, were able to predict the test results with a high degree of accuracy, yet they also saw merit in some of the subtest results for supplementing their perspectives. The children themselves, for the most part, enjoyed taking the tests; because great care was taken to insure their comfort and they had little understanding of the tests' purposes. With increased use of tests, however, and with more decisions about their future determined by tests, children in the future may reflect more test anxiety. Parents in this study showed interest in the results of tests their children take but want judgments made about their children to be based upon teacher observations as well as test results; parents in the future, however, may also reflect greater anxiety about tests

if the growing emphasis on test results continues. The study calls for an increasing awareness of the implications of testing and for more studies on appropriate and inappropriate uses of test results.

Table 1

Predicted and Assessed Scores on the Gesell School Readiness Test

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Subject	Sex	Chronological Age		SUBTESTS: Cubes	Interviews	Name	Numbers	Copy Forms	Incomplete Man	Visuals	Animals	Interests	Composite Developmental Age
1.	M	5.1	P	5	5	5	5	4.5	5	4.5	5	5.5	5
			A	5.5	5	5.5	4.5	5+	5+	5	5	5	5+
2.	F	4.11	P	(4)	5	5.5	5	5.5	5	5	5	5.5	5
			A	(5)	5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5	5.5	5	5.5	5-5.5
3.	F	4.11	P										
			A	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.5	6	5
4.	F	4.5	P	5	5	(6)	(5.5)	5	(5.5)	4.5	5	5.5	5
			A	5	5	(5)	(4)	4.5-5	(4.5)	4.5	4.5-5	5.5	4.5-5
5.	M	4.4	P	(4)	4.5	5	5	4.5	4	4.5	5	5	4.5
			A	(6)	5-5.5	5-5.5	4-4.5	5-5.5	4.5	4.5-5	5	5	5
6.	M	4.7	P	(3.5)	5	5	4.5	4	4	4.5	5	5.5	4.5
			A	(4.5)	5.5	4.5	-	4	4-4.5	4	5-5.5	5.5	4.5
7.	M	5.2	P	(5.5)	5.5	5	(5)	5	5	5	5	5	5
			A	(4.5)	4.5-5	4.5-5.5	(4)	5.5	4-5	5.5	5.5	4-4.5	4-5.5
8.	M	4.7	P	5	5	4	4	4.5	4.5	5	5-5.5	5	4.5+
			A	5-5.5	5	4.5	-	4.5-5	4.5-5	5	4.5-5.5	5.5	4.5+
9.	F	4.8	P	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5	5	(6)	5.5	5.5	5.5
			A	5.5	5-5.5	5.5	5	5.5	5.5	(5)	5	5.5	5.5
10.	F	4.9	P	(5)	5	5	5	4.5	(5)	5	(5.5)	(5.5)	(5)
			A	(3.5)	4.5	-	-	4	(4)	4.5-5	(4)	(4)	(4)
11.	F	4.7	P	4.5	4.5-5	4.5-5	4.5	(4.5)	(4.5)	4.5-5	4.5	4.5-5	4.5-5
			A	5	5.5	5	4.5	(5.5)	(6)	5	5	5.5	5-5.5
12.	M	4.4	P	(4)	4.5-5	4.5-5	4.5	4.5	4.5-5	(4.5)	4.5	4.5	4.5
			A	(5)	4.5	5.5-6	4	4.5-5	4.5	(6)	5	5	5
13.	F	5.2	P	4-5	5	5	4.5	4.5	4.5-5	4.5	4.5-5	4.5-5.5	4.5-5
			A	4	4.5-5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4-4.5	5	5	5.5	4.5
14.	F	5.0	P	5.5	5.5-6	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
			A	5.5-6	5.5	5.5	4.5	5.5-6	5.5	5	5.5	5.5	5.5
15.	M	4.11	P	5	5	6	5.5-6	5.5-6	5-5.5	(5)	5	5	5-5.5
			A	5.5	4.5	6	5.5	5.5	5.5	(6)	5.5	5	5.5
16.	F	4.11	P	5-5.5	*-	5.5-6	5.5	5.5	(5.5)	5.5-6	4-4.5	4.5-5	5.5
			A	4.5	4.5	6	5	5-5.5	(4.5)	6	*-	*-	4.5-5
17.	M	4.9	P	(5)	4.5-5	5	4.5	5	5	4.5-5	5	5	5
			A	(6)	5.5	5.5	4.5	5	4.5	5.5	5	5.5	5+
18.	F	5.1	P	5-5.5	5.5	5.5	5	5	5	(5)	5	5	5-5.5
			A	6	5.5	5	5	5.5-6	5.5	(5)	5.5	5.5	5.5
19.	M	5.4	P	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5-6	5.5
			A	5	5	5.5	5-5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5	5.5	5.5
20.	M	4.7	P	(4.5)	5	4.5-5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5-5	4.5	4.5	4.5-5
			A	(5.5)	5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5-5	4.5-5	5	5	4.5-5

Note. Abbreviations on table refer to the following:

P = Predicted Score A = Assessed Score * = No comparison possible - = Refused to take test or results unscorable

( ) = 1 year or more discrepancy between P and A

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